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ABSTRACT

The document establishes the need for a nationwide youth participation program and suggest strategies and problems in implementing such programs. Youth participation provides a means for young people to be released from their isolation from the rest of society by providing the opportunity for participation in socially productive activities. The volume is presented in two parts. Part I examines the adolescent predicament. Topics include the social context of youth, concepts of youth as "not yet" people, alienated youth and the alienating society, and adolescent needs. Part II, the major portion of the document, discusses youth participation at length. The first section provides criteria that may be used both in observing present programs and designing new ones, and distinguishes youth participation from other programs that benefit youth. The section concludes with an analysis of benefits of youth participation to youth, the community, the policy, and the school. The second section in Part II examines issues and concerns of program implementation. Topics include minority students, youth decision making, adult leadership, teacher training, voluntary adult participation, school credit, and the cost of youth participation. The appendix provides brief descriptions of 15 youth participation projects such as publishing community magazines, job counseling, day care work, physical therapy, tutoring, and documenting and restoring historical sites. Projects are based in public and alternative schools and in community-based agencies. (Author/KC)

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YOUTH PARTICIPATION

A CONCEPT PAPER

by

BRUCE DOLLAR

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YOUTH PARTICIPATION

A Concept Paper

by

Bruce Dollar

December 31, 1975

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December 31, 1975

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PREFACE

The old adage that "youth is wasted on the young" has taken on new meaning in our time. For even though most individuals do pass through adolescence to become productive citizens, the period of youth in our society is largely one of wasted opportunities. The waste affects youth, who are prevented from fulfilling one of their most urgent needs both as adolescents and as human beings - the need to make a difference in their environment; and it affects society, which deprives itself not only of the contributions adolescents are yearning to make here and now, but also of the opportunity to assure itself of a generation of youth fully prepared to take on adult roles and responsibilities.

Youth Participation is a strategy for overcoming this waste by providing young people with opportunities for responsible role-taking in society. In exploring this strategy, this "concept paper" presents both a theoretical framework and a knowledge base for Youth Participation. The aim is to generate greater awareness of the need for Youth Participation, as well as a better understanding of its potential to meet needs of both youth and society, in the hope that these will be the first steps toward greatly expanded participatory experiences for young people.

The writing of this paper was guided by the definition of youth participation offered by the Office of Youth Development as "a dynamic process in which young people assume increasing personal autonomy and responsibility in interactions with adults as active contributors to the institutional, community and interpersonal processes of idea and policy formulation, decision-making, planning, implementation and evaluation of activities important to the maintenance and development of themselves and others." Nonetheless, since the concept has been carefully delineated in the course of this work, the term is hereinafter assumed to carry a specific meaning of its own, and is thus capitalized.

Although extant definitions of "youth" and "adolescence" are both many and diverse (by some formulations early adolescence can start as young as age 9, while late adolescence may extend into the twenties), no attempt is made in this paper to confine its use within rigid definitional parameters. In fact, although the terms "adolescent" and "youth" are often employed to denote slightly different age spans, in this paper they are used interchangeably to refer generally to the middle of the age spectrum: the teenage years. Such broad usage should not be taken to imply either that the principles of Youth Participation have no relevance to other ages at either end of the scale, since in many cases they do, or that there are not significant developmental differences within the age span, since undoubtedly there are. Indeed, one area of needed research is how Youth Participation experiences ought to be differentiated to meet the varying needs of youth who are at different developmental stages. These distinctions have been made, where possible, in this paper, but the need for further refinements should be understood.

In this paper, Youth Participation is taken to represent both the recognition of a problem facing youth (discussed in Part I) and a strategy for its amelioration (developed in Part II). In an Introduction, the dimensions of the nationwide youth crisis are sketched, and then juxtaposed against what some young people have been able to accomplish through participation in their own communities. Also included is a statement of the definition of Youth Participation employed in this paper. "The Adolescent Predicament," the social and institutional context of youth that reduces them to marginal status and creates the countervailing need for greater participation is then examined in Part I. Part II, which discusses "Youth Participation" at length, is divided into two subsections. The first of these answers the question "What Is Youth Participation?" Beginning with an elaborated definition of Youth Participation as well as criteria that may be used both in observing current programs and in designing new ones, this section goes on to distinguish Youth Participation from some other types of programs that benefit youth, describes the many types of programs that do fall under the Youth Participation umbrella, and concludes by exploring some of the potential benefits of these programs. The second section under Part II goes on to discuss some of the key "Issues and Concerns" surrounding Youth Participation, with particular attention given to general problems of implementation. The Conclusion then examines from a societal perspective some of the impediments to widespread adoption of Youth Participation, underscoring the need for a positive national policy on youth development.

INTRODUCTION

> See, I knew how bad Kenny was supposed to be in school, but that didn't mean _I_ thought he was bad. I knew what kind of pressures he was under in his life, because I felt them too when I was his age. In fact, I still feel them, only I try not to let on, because - well, he's got his own problems, and I'm there to help _him_, you know? So I try to act as an example for him, like, be someone he can look up to. It makes me feel good to know he's counting on me coming to help him. If it wasn't for Kenny, I probably wouldn't be in school myself.
>
> Duane, age 16

Duane met eight-year-old Kenny soon after joining a Youth Tutoring Youth program.[1] Although his "official" assignment was to help the younger boy in reading, it is obvious that Duane thought there were some other things he might teach him at the same time. In the process, Duane, along with literally thousands like him, is in effect giving lessons to adults, too. Before he became a tutor, Duane's teachers had written him off as a dud, his counselor considered him alienated and self-destructive, and his parents had just about thrown up their hands in despair. Needless to say, Duane's own opinion of himself was scarcely better, and he was on the verge of dropping out - possibly from more than school alone. Now, to their amazement, these adults are learning of Duane's capacities for acting responsibly, for showing patience and sensitivity, and for beating his own path to maturity. To Duane, the difference is that at last he feels needed, and what he decides and how he behaves matter - both to him and to someone else.

What is important to Duane about the tutoring program is his newfound sense of purpose and his relationship with Kenny. We are concerned with his program as an example of Youth Participation.

The term Youth Participation represents both the awareness of a problem and an approach to its solution. The problem is in America's treatment - or mistreatment - of its youth. Placed in the charge of institutions that insulate them from society's mainstream, condemned to uselessness at a critical moment in their development, they are expected to prepare for the complexities of adult life without participating in significant activities. As one prominent educator has put it, "There has been a powerful erosion of the process by which youth become responsible adults in American society...Young people are starving for lack of maturity-producing experiences."[2] Youth Participation in effect is the response to this problem. It is a means by which young people can be released from their isolation from the rest of society and given an opportunity to prepare for adulthood by participating in socially productive activities.

Youth Participation is an idea whose time is overdue. Young people themselves have been trying, through methods both constructive and destructive, to get the message across. A number of recent reports on large scale studies of youth have both added to our knowledge of the problem and joined in a call for badly needed reforms. Perhaps the clearest statement to date of both problem and solution has been that of the Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Committee, chaired by James S. Coleman. In its report it recommends "the introduction of roles other than the student for a young person is school" and "innovations which involve a mixture of part time school and part time work."[3] It has prompted Robert Havighurst, Professor of Education and Human Development at the University of Chicago, to state bluntly that

> We are caught in a crisis that will worsen the social health of the next generation of adults in our society unless some of the remedies proposed by the Coleman Youth Panel are applied very soon.[4]

Right here in the present, however, the crisis is having devastating effects on the social health of today's youth. Symptoms of the crisis, as evidenced in a welter of recent diverse studies and statistics, show it to be reaching overwhelming proportions. Few people realize, for instance, that almost a quarter of all unemployment in the United States is among teenagers.[5] The youth unemployment rate reached a startling 20% by early 1975 - three times higher than the rate for adults, up from 12.7% ten years ago.[6] For those who are both young and Black or of Mexican, Puerto Rican or Native American descent, the jobless rate is at least twice as high - reaching an estimated 60% to 70% in the inner city.[7]

Juveniles under age 21 now account for 61% of all arrests for serious crimes in this country, with arrests in this category having increased more than 1600% since 1952.[8]

Teenage drug abuse has reached alarming proportions: in addition to hard drug use, a recent nationwide study for the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism found 28% of teenagers to be "problem drinkers."[9]

Nowhere are the indications of crisis more dramatic than in the schools. A preliminary report on violence and vandalism in public schools issued by the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency showed a sharp rise since 1970 in in-school offenses. In addition to reporting alarming increases in robberies and assaults on both students and teachers, the nationwide cost in school vandalism was estimated at $500 million a year - a sum comparable to the national investment in textbooks in 1972, or an average yearly cost of $60,000 per school district.[10]

To cite these indicators is not to claim them to be exclusively the result of the isolation and exclusion of the young, nor is it to claim greater participation to be the unique solution. The causes of the youth crisis are manifold and complex, and strategies for reversing it will be no less so. Still, when the crisis takes hold in a nation whose official policies toward youth reflect mostly indifference and whose institutions for youth stress mostly containment, the concept of Youth Participation, with its emphasis on inclusion of the young in positive, responsible roles, has undeniable pertinence to the problems facing youth - as well as, hopefully, an immediate bearing on its remediation.

Meanwhile, without waiting for instructions from on high, thousands of young people and adults in hundreds of communities across the country have been devising their own *ad hoc* solutions to the predicament of youth. In a great variety of forms indicative of their local origins, these efforts are forming the base for a potential movement to provide Youth Participation on a large scale. The examples that follow can only hint at their range:

> Community Problem Solving. In New York City, young members of the Teenage Tenants Council have learned to spot and report housing violations in their neighborhood. A youth-run ecology

organization in San Francisco bought equipment and recycled 2500 pounds of aluminum in its first year of operation. In Hoffman, Minnesota, students visit, regularly, the town's nursing home for the aged and an activity center for the mentally retarded; their school compositions reflect their experiences with their institutionalized companions.

Community Human-Power. In Denver, students at Manual High School build and renovate houses as part of urban redevelopment plans. In Vermont, students in a state-wide program called DUO (Do Unto Others) receive academic credit for work in a wide variety of service and community agencies. Students in Darien, Connecticut, operate an emergency ambulance service. In San Francisco, young people staff the Exploratorium Science Museum.

Entrepreneurship. Teenagers in Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York, created and maintained a natural science museum which provides education and recreation for themselves, younger children, and the rest of the community. Home economics students in Portland, Oregon, opened a restaurant in their school and prepared daily meals for teachers and students. Fifteen high school students in Fort Knox, Kentucky, serve as elected officers of a student-controlled credit union that has helped students secure loans and save over $41,000 in six years.

Communications. Navajo youth in Utah interview the old people in their tribe and preserve their traditional tales on film and in books. Youth in Washington, D.C. publish their own magazine, Cityscape, which explores the history of their urban neighborhood and the lives and occupations of its residents, through articles, interviews and photographs. Guilford, Connecticut, junior high school students researched the history of their town and presented it in a booklet entitled "Twelve Spoons and Two English Coats."

Resources for Other Youth. Students in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania run an Unwinding Room, where young people can drop in for informal counseling by their peers. Youth Advocates, a crisis service in Seattle, Washington, trains teenagers to staff a hot line and rap center for other young people. High school students in Berkeley, California, provide vocational guidance, training in job application skills and counseling services to their peers.

Curriculum Building. A social studies lab cart with multimedia presentations prepared by students was invented and has been operated by students in Enfield, Connecticut, for the past seven years. High school youth in Philadelphia provide a traveling puppet show to educate younger children about the dangers of drugs, VD, and alcoholism. Another group of high school students, in the same city, has developed an environmental curriculum which they use to teach younger children.

The young people in these programs and the ones described at greater length in the Appendix are demonstrating, along with thousands of others, that when given a chance youth can make a significant contribution to their communities while meeting their own needs for defining themselves through creative activities. The term Youth Participation has been coined to represent their efforts -- to provide a rubric under which greater attention may be focused on them, and hopefully to serve as an organizing principle for the extension of similar opportunities to all youth in our society. The term is thus intended to serve several functions simultaneously. As a concept it stands for responsible role-taking by young people. As a program umbrella it encompasses those programs that meet the following defining criteria:

> Youth Participation means the involvement of youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs with opportunity for planning and/or decision making affecting others, in an activity whose impact or consequences extends to others - i.e., outside or beyond the youth participants themselves.

Before taking up the meaning and implications of this definition (in Part II), we shall first examine the "adolescent predicament" that gives it its significance and its urgency.

I. THE ADOLESCENT PREDICAMENT

> The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them, that's the essence of inhumanity.
>
> G. B. Shaw

The Social Context of Youth

The highly industrialized, technological age we live in has brought about a number of significant changes in the societal context of youth. In earlier generations, as an agrarian, early industrial society, America required large quantities of unskilled labor. Young people had a productive role to play, often taking part in work on the family farm, or in the family trade or business. With industrialization, however, came both the decline of unskilled jobs and the need for greater skills to fill emerging employment opportunities. These changing economic realities have made it necessary for young people to postpone their entry into adult occupations.

To occupy young people during the years before they can be absorbed as workers, the role of schooling has been greatly expanded. An early reflection of this trend, compulsory attendance at school until age 16, has been extended to the point where today it is necessary, if a worthwhile job is to be found, to remain in school at least long enough to get a high school diploma, and for the many jobs requiring further certification, even longer. Even then, entry into the job market is not guaranteed, as the figures on youth unemployment, cited earlier, make clear.

The role of the family has also changed. Recent years have seen the progressive breakdown of the family as society's primary socializing institution - a failure brought about, according to Urie Bronfenbrenner, Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at Cornell University, by "a 'withering away' of the support systems in the larger society that...enable the family to function."[11] Among the factors in this breakdown, Bronfenbrenner mentions

> The fragmentation of the extended family, the separation of residential and business areas, the disappearance of neighborhoods, zoning ordinances, occupational mobility, child labor laws, the abolishment of the apprentice system, consolidated schools, television, separate patterns of social life for different age groups, the working mother, the delegation of child care to specialists...[12]

Whereas sons and daughters were once expected to contribute economically to the family, today's youth are more often experienced, and see themselves, as a financial burden on the family. Furthermore, the family is increasingly unable to provide the kind of career guidance that was possible in a less specialized age. Working parents are now more apt to have narrow, specialized skills that limit both their own knowledge of, and their children's exposure to, other options. As new careers emerge and familiar ones disappear, moreover, what knowledge parents do have of occupational choices may rapidly become obsolete.

The decline in importance of several of the traditional socializing institutions for youth - including work, family, religion, and neighborhood - has correspondingly increased the burden on the schools, which now, unwittingly, are vested with the primary responsibility for preparing the young for adulthood. The American high school has grown from an institution serving scarcely ten percent of the adolescnet population in 1900, to a gigantic enterprise serving over 90% of the age group today.[13] As they are now organized, however, the schools can only partially prepare the young for satisfying, socially productive adulthood. Their traditional emphasis on cognitive development has led to institutional structures and practices that are ill-suited to meeting other equally important developmental needs of adolescents.

The typical school is an enclosed institution - an "age ghetto", in the words of one critic.[14] Seeming to respond to a desire on the part of society to keep the young out of its hair, the typical school effectively precludes contact with the community. The result is that young people today are our largest segregated minority. The segregation, it is said,[15] takes three forms. First, the institution they are required by law to attend isolates and insulates them from the rest of society. When students are permitted to venture outside the school, it is typically in the capacity of visitor or spectator, on an excursion known as a "field trip". The second kind of segregation, the bureaucratic practice of age grouping within the schools, means that students spend their entire school career, from early childhood to adulthood, largely separated from all but their own age "cohort". Often, because of conditions of modern society, they also gain little or no experience with persons at either end of the age spectrum - the very young and the elderly. Some think youth are separated by social class and race. Even if their schools serve areas that are mixed racially and socio-economically, the chances are that students are re-separated into tracks once they get to school.

The exclusion of youth from the activities of the adult world takes place in an era in which young people have more of the physical and mental tools for participation than ever before. Physical maturity occurs increasingly earlier - two years earlier today than at the turn of the century. And modern communications media assure a steady stream of information.

> Today's television child is attuned to up-to-the-minute "adult" news - inflation, rioting, war, taxes, crime, bathing beauties - and is bewildered when he (*sic*) enters the nineteenth-century environment that still characterizes the educational establishment where information is scarce but ordered, and structured by fragmented, classified patterns, subjects, schedule.[16]

A century ago, as James S. Coleman has observed, the young were "action-rich" and "information-poor".[17] Today, that situation has been reversed. We maintain our schools as "aging vats" that force passivity, prolong dependence, and delay the learning of adult roles, work habits and skills. The effect is to block the opportunity of adolescents to fulfill their most deeply felt need: to develop, through interaction with the real world, a sense of individual identity and self-worth. The social limbo to which we consign adolescents, moreover, denies

> the fundamental fact of the adolescent life style: the fact of contribution. The adolescent must give; he [sic] must build; he must construct; he must register impact upon his social and physical environment; he must feel a sense of meaningful involvement in the significant events of his personal world. To ask the adolescent to live his day-to-day existence without contributing is to ask him to behave contrary to his basic makeup.[18]

Concepts of Adolescence: The "Not-Yet" People

Adolescents in our culture occupy a void in the social structure. No longer children but not yet adults, they are considered transitional beings who must spend their time - the period of "vestibule adolescence", as Kenneth Clark has called it[19] - in preparation for eventual adulthood. Rather than allowing this preparation to grow out of and be the product of present activity, however, preparation has come to be equated with postponement - with the acquisition of concepts, skills and information to be applied at some future time. Accordingly, adolescence itself has come to be equated with waiting. As one contemporary text states it, "adolescence, then, can be defined as a holding period in which education, maturation, and waiting are the major tasks to be faced".[20] In his essay on "Experience and Education", Dewey explores this misconception of preparation"

> The idea of using the present simply to get ready for the future contradicts itself. It omits, and even shuts out, the very conditions by which a person can be prepared for his future. We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future. This is the only preparation which in the long run amounts to anything.[21]

The conception of adolescence as a waiting period reflects society's failure to understand or respond to the needs of youth. At a time when they need above all else to feel a sense of their own importance, they are forced to be passive and dependent, deprived of the chance to make a difference in the world.

Alienated Youth and Alienating Society

Many young people appear to reject the customs, values and responsibilities of the adult world. For some this means withdrawal from the rest of society, while for others it is expressed as active hostility. In describing this disaffection of youth, however, many commentators overlook the reciprocal nature of alienation - the likelihood that the active rejection may itself be a response to a feeling of being rejected by society. The rejection is compounded for lower class adolescents, especially members of racial minorities, who perceive their inability to gain access to satisfying and rewarding jobs and adult roles in the dominant society while that same society, through its media, constantly tantalizes them with images of life styles and material goods that seem hopelessly out of reach. Upper middle and middle class youth, meanwhile, may see many of the roles available to them in the dominant culture as unacceptable. In any case, the treatment of adolescents in general as useless, marginal beings with nothing significant to contribute more than justifies their conclusion that they have been rejected.

> The best way to insure that young people get into trouble is to design their environment so that non-troublesome behavior does not make a difference. Strip them of the ability to make a difference legally and they will find ways to make a difference illegally. Making a difference is far more important than efficiency, harmony, smoothness of operation, and learning subject matter and writing lessons.[22]

Unfortunately, the reactions of young people to their predicament are usually taken to be the defining characteristics of adolescence, with the result that "most of what we consider 'knowledge' about adolescent behavior is little more than social pathology which derives when an entire group of people have nothing worthwhile to do."[23] By focusing on symptoms rather than on their social and cultural determinants we have derived a conception of adolescence that seeks explanations for their behavior exclusively in innate constitutional causes rather than in frustrated needs. Adolescents behave that way, goes the tautological reasoning, because that is the way adolescents behave.

To illustrate the infirm base of just one generalization about adolescents, take the cliche of rebelliousness against authority as the hallmark of youth. The generalization is faulty, first, in that it cannot be reconciled with numerous incidents in which young peop are drawn to certain people in authority. Second, it fails to distinguish between types of authority, as, for instance, the arbitrary impersonal authoritarianism of some adults vs. the supportive, compassionate, natural authority of some others. As Erikson has pointed out, youth seeks "most fervently for men and ideas to have faith in". They need teachers "by acclamation rather than by appointment"[24]- that is, rather than the delegated authority of disciplinarians, they need significant contact with the natural authority of adults who will serve as models. Meanwhile, many youth, as we all know, do rebel; enough, in fact, to cause widespread concern. But it is important to know when this rebellion is internally caused and when it may result from the social isolation of youth. One observer challenges the view that today's youth are rebelling symbolically against parental authority:

> Rebellious youth is not fighting against any fathers; on the contrary, it is outraged by the absence of parental figures and familial warmth in the bureaucratic institutions that envelop it.[25]

Finally, there is the possibility that what has gained recognition as the "generation gap" might better be interpreted as a "culture gap", a by-product of the heterogeneity of values in our society. Rather than a gap between upper middle class "hippies" and "activists" and their parents, the significant gap may be the one felt by working and lower middle class parents and teachers who observe the children of the affluent caught up not in the work and conventional success ethic but in an ethic of self-actualization.[26]

Certainly adolescence is a period of turbulence and stress. But society has a responsibility to determine how much of this stress is endogenously caused (i.e. as a function of adolescence) and how much is created or exacerbated by environmental conditions. There is reason to believe that American cultural values lead us to rely on the former perspective in explaining adolescent behavior to the detriment of social considerations. By recognizing and understanding the parts of the adolescent predicament for which we are responsible, and which we may influence or control, we may take the first steps toward a remedy for adolescent alienation.

Adolescent Stereotypes vs. Adolescent Individuals

Disadvantaged sub-groups within a population often have their inferior position reinforced through the perpetuation of popular stereotypes. The stereotypical adolescent is familiar to us all; it has two major versions, one corny, the other dangerous. The image of the trivial teenager is of a gum chewing, self-conscious individual, lazy and awkward, subject to inane whims and fads, hung up on clothes and sex and a slave to group norms and acceptance by peers. These teenagers have a tendency to divide into cliques called "heads" and "jocks" and "greasers", and to fight it out among themselves - mostly as a way to burn up sexual energy. (A minor character in this teenage world is the intelligent kid, recognizable by being ugly and dumpy and wearing thick glasses.) The second major type is the rebellious, volatile, irresponsible youth, the product of our permissiveness who is out to destroy all that society has built up through hard work. The first stereotype allows us to laugh at the adolescents, or simply to dismiss them; the second allows us to use them as scapegoats for society's ills, or it justifies their repression. Both are exploited relentlessly by the media, to the point where even well-meaning adults unconsciously accept them.

Adolescent stereotypes act to block our understanding of who adolescents are and further to isolate them, both from society and from themselves (for young people are as susceptible to them as anyone else). They obscure from public consciousness not only the possibility, but also the reality of other adolescent identities. What stereotype does Duane, the young man quoted on page one, fit? As a matter of fact, his high school teachers did think they had him "pegged" as a basically dull future semi-skilled laborer who would probably soon drop out of school because he just didn't care enough to do good at much of anything. Duane, naturally, shared this assessment. But given the slightest chance to become important in someone else's eyes, to make a difference in Kenny's life, and those same teachers began talking about the "miracle" of Duane's transformation. "A miracle" was the only way available to explain why Duane failed to live up to the stereotype.

Yet, "one of the most evident characteristics of adolescents is their consistent violation of the generalized norms used to describe them. This is perhaps the one valid generalization that can be made about young people."[27] Adolescence is characterized by great diversity on almost every dimension. There is thus not only a need to be attentive to the social determinants of adolescent behavior, but also a positive need to allow for individual differences - in developmental pace, in response to the world, and in personal styles and preferences. Recent (and not so recent) writings on adolescents have stressed the heterogeneity of the adolescent experience - "that adolescents might display as wide a range of ideologies, attitudes, customs, motives and habits as are abroad in adult society."[28] The insights that have been developed in the literature have not had much impact on mass media or on policy considerations of adolescence.

One apparent effect of the continuing overgeneralizing about adolescents, it has been suggested, has been the failure to distinguish between early and late adolescence. If it is true, for instance, that youth are strongly impelled toward belonging, acceptance, popularity and membership, these social needs, according to at least one psychologist, tend to peak during early adolescence (about 12 to 14).[29] During middle to late adolescence they are likely to be gradually replaced by more adult needs, such as the needs for meaningful involvement, positive contribution, self assertion and preparation for the future. There is reason to expect, in fact, "the adolescent obsession with peer groups to diminish in direct proportion to the amount of meaningful involvement outside of segregated peer groups. Stated succinctly: as the opportunity for genuine outside involvement increases, dependency and fixation upon the peer group decreases."[30]

The Needs of Adolescents

Defining youth or adolescent needs is not an easy task given the context of our pluralistic, rapidly changing society. First, we are unable to reach a consensus on values (or, goals) concerning youth - e.g. what constitutes "healthy" development, what it means to be a successful adult, etc. Second, those widely-held values that can be identified are subject to change in response to change in social and economic circumstances. (For example, the traditional work ethic of the first half of the century of being a successful and productive worker has been traced through its replacement in the post-War years by an ethic of sociability or fitting into the organization, to its more recent incarnation, particularly among contemporary youth, as an ethic of social responsibility.[31]

Various attempts have been made to define adolescent needs. One approach has been to formulate them in terms of "objectives for healthy development". While this may sidestep (or beg) the question of agreed-upon values - a move that may be justifiable in its pragmatism, given the unlikelihood of arriving at any society-wide consensus - it does serve the function of providing guidelines for programmatic action. Thus, Coleman, without defining "adulthood", suggests two "classes" of objectives for a successful transition to adulthood: objectives that are self-centered, i.e. those that expand the personal capabilities, and thus opportunities, of individual youth; and objectives that relate the individual to others, i.e. that provide the opportunity for "the mutually responsible and mutually rewarding involvement with others that constitutes social maturity." Included in this second class of objectives is "experience with persons differing in social class, subculture and in age," "the experience of having others dependent on one's actions," and "involvement in interdependent activities directed towards collective goals."[32] Similarly, Gisela Konopka, in a study of "Requirements for Healthy Development of Adolescent Youth," concluded that young people should be provided with opportunities

> - to participate as citizens, as members of a household, as workers, as responsible members of society;
> - to gain experience in decision making;
> - to interact with peers and acquire a sense of belonging;
> - to reflect on self in relation to others and to discover self by looking outward as well as inward;
> - to discuss conflicting values and formulate their own value system;
> - to experiment with their own identity, with relationships to other people, with ideas; to try out various roles without having to commit themselves irrevocably;
> - to develop a feeling of accountability in the context of a relationship among equals;
> - to cultivate a capacity to enjoy life.[33]

Descriptions of adolescent needs with regard to the transitions from youth to adulthood are often limited by the oversimplification of key concepts, most notably those of "adult" and "youth". Adulthood, for example, largely through being left undefined, has been treated as a univocal concept. Yet

> adulthood is surely not a homogeneous category. By implication, the transition to adulthood must be discussed with reference to its varieties; at the least we should speak of transitions to adulthoods.[34]

There is a similar need for differentiations in definitions of adolescent needs to account for the different stages within adolescence. The contrast in the general characteristics of early adolescence and late adolescence, for example, is quite pronounced, necessitating careful distinctions when articulating the associated developmental needs.[35] In another formulation of differing stages Kenneth Keniston, in an influential article, identified two seemingly distinct transitions that young people undergo, one which he identifies with "adolescence", the other with "youth". "The adolescent," he writes, "is struggling to define who he (sic) is; the youth begins to sense who he is and then to recognize the possibility of conflict and disparity between his emerging selfhood and his social order."[36] Or, as another writer put it, "adolescents are more concerned with what society expects of them, and youth is concerned with what they may expect of society."[37] Both the adolescent and the youth transitions require the taking on of unfamiliar roles, first as a member of society, then as a critic of it.

The emergence in recent years of various stage theories of development has suggested an alternative approach to the definition of adolescent needs. Hierarchies of human development have now been devised for cognitive growth (Piaget),[38] ego development (Loevinger)[39] social interaction (Selman)[40] and moral judgement (Kohlberg),[41] and have produced a body of opinion that favors a restructuring of the educational system to provide for the "stimulation of the next step of development rather than... the transmission of information or indoctrination to fixed social values"[42]

It is not necessary to resolve the uncertainty surrounding adolescent needs in order to expand and improve opportunities for today's youth. Adolescence is a stressful period. Rapid physical changes, the intensification of sexual needs, the emergence of self-discovery and self-actualization are immediate, urgent life-tasks: all contribute to the burden of being an adolescent. The search for identity - occupational, sexual, moral - that characterizes this period is made enormously more difficult by our modern world. For career options, sex roles and social values, as we have seen, are themselves undergoing rapid change. This double jeopardy - the inherent burdens of adolescence and growing uncertainty about the future - makes society's cavalier treatment of adolescents that much more harmful and indefensible.

Yet, from the perspectives of both youth and society, adolescence need not be a burden; it is, or should be, an opportunity. For adolescence is also a period of renewed energy, openness to commitment and personal investment. Unlike the early or pre-adolescent who is unequipped to deal effectively with abstract concepts, or with what Piaget calls "formal operations", the adolescent attains this new competence, and with it a capacity for a strong feeling for causes and moral rightness. This new capability, expressed in the characterization of the adolescent by one psychologist as a "moral philosopher", seeks an outlet in action, in the ability to contribute to and benefit from participation in community affairs. Adolescence is thus an ideal time for a person to engage actively in the life of a community and to be exposed to a variety of groups, personalities and points of view, for at no other period is one likely to be as highly motivated to ponder the meanings to oneself of the social, political and moral issues that surround one. Conclusions reached in this period, and the decisions that are based on them, may well last a lifetime.

II. YOUTH PARTICIPATION

> In my work in American schools, whenever I have seen students able to contribute as adults to community work, to urban renewal, to hospitals, to youth counseling centers, in tutoring situations, in day care, in farm work, I have observed a glow of well-being, a kind of relief as of a new-found equilibrium, which I have not found elsewhere.
>
> Charity James

What is Youth Participation?

Youth Participation is a term with both very broad and very specific implications. On the one hand it is broad enough to meet a wide range of adolescent needs as outlined in the first sections of this paper. On the other hand, precisely because of its possible breadth and, therefore, vagueness, it must be defined narrowly and carefully enough to minimize its chances of being applied indiscriminately. It is important to establish standards of qualification for use of the term Youth Participation, lest it be construed so broadly as to lose its cutting edge.

The National Commission on Resources for Youth, apparently the only organization to have devoted its activities exclusively to issues and practices of Youth Participation on a nationwide scale, has sought to develop such a definition and such a set of standards.[43] It has been hampered in its efforts by a number of factors that are inherent in the subject. Most of these factors stem from the way Youth Participation is emerging in the real world and the complexity that has resulted.

Unlike some previous educational innovations(the open classroom or the British infant school come to mind)that have been devised, or discovered, and then promulgated to the school system as the latest reform, Youth Participation has been very much a grassroots movement. Rather than a response to educational reformers who have defined the need and the solution, most Youth Participation programs have been the product of local or individual responses to a locally or individually felt need. They have been a practitioner's, rather than a theorist's or administrator's, response; that is, they have been designed and operated for the most part by teachers and, in many cases, by students themselves. Those projects that have sprung up outside the schools have followed a similar pattern, having been set up by concerned individuals, often but not always youth agency-based, who saw a way to bring their own interests and skills together with the needs of a group of young people. An appropriate metaphor for this process might say that Youth Participation has not been cultivated by educational farmers systematically sowing programmatic seeds to produce a predictable crop; rather it has been a spore-like propagation: spawned from cells (i.e. both needs and resources) that are in the air everywhere; having taken root in spots where the soil and the climate were favorable; in a form adapted to its surroundings. Indeed, Youth Participation projects have sprung up, spontaneously and in growing profusion, like mushrooms across the national landscape.

One very well-known Youth Participation program, Foxfire, is a perfect example of this unique match of community conditions, youth resources and needs and catalyzing adult leader. It began in the Southern Appalachian town of Rabun Gap, Georgia, when a class of high school students and their teacher both got bored with the regular curricular materials and began looking for an alternative. They hit upon the idea of documenting the folk wisdom of the old mountain people in their area and reporting it in their own magazine, which they named Foxfire. The result over the last few years has been the rescue of a priceless cultural heritage of crafts, folkways and reminiscences that might have died unrecorded with the last generation that carried it in their heads but for the efforts of the young people of Foxfire. So rich was their source that the material printed in this magazine has been collected into three books,[44] each of which in turn has become a national bestseller.

A Definition and Criteria for Youth Participation

While the nature of Youth Participation programs as home-grown products has undoubtedly accounted for many of their strengths, it also poses problems when it comes to trying to generalize about them. NCRY has attempted to develop criteria that would serve simply to define what Youth Participation is and what it is not; but projects that have sprung up idiosyncratically to meet a unique set of local conditions, rather than a general set of universal criteria, can be quite resistant to abstracted criteria. To say that youth must have the opportunity to make decisions, for example, may at first seem to be a fairly straightforward requirement; but an operational definition of decision making proves to be highly elusive. Similarly, it is very well to state that participants in a Youth Participation project must be able to exercise real responsibility, or to experience the consequences of their actions, but these terms, too, can be stretched or manipulated to apply almost indiscriminately to a whole range of possible circumstances. There is clearly a need for research on these questions - both heuristic investigations of operating programs and further theoretical work refining definitions.

The criteria proposed here are presented with some hesitancy, in part because of their admittedly primitive data base, but perhaps more importantly due to a concern that they not be regarded as comprehensive and exclusive. It must be stressed, first, that the criteria, though couched in prescriptive language, are intended to describe an ideal to which programs ought to aspire, and, second, that relatively few actual Youth Participation programs can claim that they meet them all. All the items mentioned have been found to be the frequent attributes of programs that appeared most successful (by impressionistic assessment). It is probably prudent in these early stages of investigation to apply the criteria leniently, lest worthwhile programs be too hastily "disqualified." Besides, viewed realistically, the criteria are demanding, and those who can only approximate a few of them should not be entirely discouraged: the youth involved will probably be better off, in any case.

With these caveats firmly in mind, then, we may proceed to the formulation of an elaborated definition of Youth Participation that can serve both to assess the extent to which a given project approximates the hypothetical ideal and to guide in the planning and design of new Youth Participation programs. Youth Participation can thus be defined as involving youth in responsible, challenging action, that meets genuine needs, with opportunity for planning and/or decision making affecting others, in an activity whose impact or consequences extends to others - i.e. outside or beyond the youth participants themselves. Other desirable features, whose necessary inclusion in the definition may be debated, are provision for critical reflection on the participatory activity and the opportunity for a group effort toward a common goal. A discussion of the components of this definition follows.

Responsible, challenging action. "Responsible" is understood here to mean 1) having others dependent on one's actions, and 2) the opportunity to experience the consequences of one's actions, including the failures. "Challenging" means that the action is both meaningful (it is significant and not trivial) and difficult: the action, that is, requires reaching beyond the previous range of one's knowledge or performance.[45] Implied in these terms are the obligation, where appropriate, to be held accountable, and the right to risk and experience failure. "Action" refers to the necessity that one is an active participant rather than merely a spectator or a visitor.

Meets genuine needs. This means that the participatory action fulfills needs for both the youth and society, involving participants in tasks that both young people and some elements of society recognize as important.

Planning or decision making affecting others. "Planning" in this instance refers to the goals and activities of the program itself, as well as of oneself - either or both. "Decision making" means participating in both individual and group decisions, usually in a context of problem-solving, and in decisions relating to their work affecting oneself and "affecting others."

Impact or consequences extending to others. This phrase means that the activity has practical implications beyond whatever the youth participants themselves get out of it; it is the social dimension of Youth Participation, its application in the outside world, aimed at insuring that youth have an opportunity to make a contribution to their surroundings - to "make a difference."

Provision for critical reflection. There is a need to link practice with theory. Youth Participation programs often combine participatory experience with the study of substantive subject matter, for instance, the study of child development to support work in a child care center. Experience alone does not automatically produce learning; Dewey warned, in fact, that experience by itself could be mis-educative. "Provision for critical reflection," them, is intended to emphasize the function of Youth Participation with regard to deliberate learning - the need to reflect upon and examine one's experience in order for it to "take." Components of such a provision in Youth Participation could include orientation and in-service training for the program activity, a seminar in which participants discuss their experiences, group self-evaluation, and experience-based teaching methods such as problem-solving and the inquiry or discovery method. Provision for a structured seminar is not regarded as absolutely necessary because of the possibility that some program experiences may be educative, i.e. entailing reflection, in themselves.

Group effort toward a common goal. This feature is often cited as an important developmental experience often not available to adolescents.[46] It has also, where present, proved to be a highly motivating feature of Youth Participation projects and a critical factor in their success. If it has not been included as a necessary component of Youth Participation, this is only because certain program forms - notably the internship or apprenticeship model - involve youth in individualized activities that are very worthwhile and that meet the other criteria.

Youth Participation Distinguished From Other Programs

Vocational Education. Vocational (or "vocational-technical") education is concerned with providing occupational skills, and is more directly concerned with giving young people advanced training and thus a head start in the occupation the student chooses. Although Youth Participation often gives young people exposure to occupations they might choose, the emphasis is rather on the cultivation of more generalized personal skills and resources, such as responsibility, decision making, compassion and cooperation. In fact, Youth Participation may be seen as an opportunity for youth to be exposed to jobs in institutions they are not likely to choose, as a means of deepening young people's understanding of their community. Youth Participation is also often integrated with the academic study of a related field, and may readily be linked with development in the affective domain, including understanding values, group processes and personal problem solving - areas that are not usually encompassed by the vocational curriculum.

Career Education. While vocational education is a job training design, career education aims more at choice-preparation, seeking through a variety of methods to prepare students to make informed choices about eventual employment. As such it is distinguishable from Youth Participation on at least three dimensions. First, it is future-oriented, emphasizing preparation for future choices rather than providing, as Youth Participation does, opportunities to make and act on choices in the present. Second, career education is still adult-directed, that is, governed by what adult planners and futurists have charted as the most viable career fields; Youth Participation, on the other hand, emphasizes the young people's role in structuring their present experience. Third, while career education is tied directly to potential careers, Youth Participation, while it often involves career-related experiences, does not rule out experiences - such as the many human service or social action activities - that may bear little relation to likely future careers. Tutoring another person, for instance, or working to clean up a river have real value in the present. Furthermore, for the sake of present needs (which naturally have great relevance for the future) Youth Participation can comprehend exposing a future laboratory technician to barn building, or a future computer programmer to ship's carpentry. A final difference between the two approaches is that while career education centers on the individual, Youth Participation often emphasizes group projects and working as a group toward a common goal.

Work Study. In work-study, or cooperative education, programs, students are given an opportunity, through an arrangement between school (usually college) and employers, to alternate or combine academic studies with paid work experience in related fields of employment. As a form of paid job orientation or career exploration, it does not share Youth Participation's central focus on opportunities for young people to engage in socially meaningful activities, often in groups, in which they exercise the responsible decision making roles.

Action-Learning. Action-learning, or experiential learning (the former is sometimes treated as a sub-form of the latter) comes closest to what is described in this paper as Youth Participation, and many features of action learning practically coincide with aspects of Youth Participation:

> Action-learning is learning from experience and associated study that is or could be accredited by an educational institution. Action-learning embraces the experiential learning components of work-study, cooperative education, work-service, service learning, career education, and many forms of internship, on the job training, and self-directed work and study. Action-learning may involve tutoring younger children, a learning program connected with work in a department store or a veterinary clinic, a study of municipal water pollution or waste disposal, an internship in a classroom, at city hall, at union headquarters, or with a welfare agency.[47]

The difference between action-learning and Youth Participation is one of emphasis. As their names suggest, one stresses learning through action while the other insists more explicitly on action-cum-responsibility as implied in the word "participation". Action-learning often entails responsible role taking, though it is not necessarily inherent in its definition. Youth Participation always entails action and learning while also stressing responsibility. The choice of terms in this paper is intended to include that emphasis.

Youth Representation on Policy Making Bodies. While the inclusion of representatives of youth on the policy making bodies of organizations whose activities affect young people - for example, schools and school boards, welfare commissions, recreation commissions and hospital boards - is laudable, much needed and overdue, it is distinguishable from Youth Participation in that the participatory experience is usually limited to the representatives alone. Youth Participation aims rather at insuring active, first hand participation for the masses of youth. (With this broad participation, the youth representatives could then be selected from among young people with actual participatory experience, making them that much better qualified to take constructive roles in deliberative bodies.)

Others. There are several other kinds of activities that involve young people that, while worthwhile, need to be distinguished from Youth Participation. The short-term, single-shot service "event" is one of these. They take such forms as a spaghetti dinner or a car wash to raise funds for some worthy cause; a Christmas party or a clothing drive to help needy children; or other such benefits and fund raising drives. Youth Participation, by contrast, would require an ongoing, longer-term commitment; the possibility of some significant, systematic learning; and, instead of the following of instructions and rules set down by adults (since many of these are traditional events staged by adults or adult-dominated youth organizations), the opportunity for the young people to use their energies and imaginations to do what _they_ want to do.

Much of the volunteer work traditionally reserved for young people makes a contribution but does not meet Youth Participation criteria. Typical examples include work in a hospital as a "candy-striper" or "pink lady", in which young women simply carry out chores assigned by a supervisor with no provision for a critical perspecitve or for making independent decisions; clerical work (e.g. in a non-profit organization) limited to envelope stuffing, card filing and the like; or other such menial, boring, unchallenging work.

Forms of Youth Participation

Although programs that could be classified as Youth Participation have been cropping up here and there for many years, a marked upsurge in their number seems to have taken place in the last several years, with signs that the upward trend is continuing. The only agency apparently to have monitored these developments is the National Commission on Resources for Youth, which for the past eight years has been identifying and investigating Youth Participation programs across the country. Over a thousand projects have been systematically validated (i.e. subjected to the Commission's standards) and written up in NCRY files. Although there are certainly many, many projects that are not represented in the files (new ones are appearing all the time), they comprise the most extensive repository of information currently available on the state of Youth Participation in North America. It is these files that serve as the data base for this paper.

Because the overwhelming majority, as mentioned above, are the product of independent, local imagination and initiative, the projects take an extraordinarily diverse variety of forms. They vary, for example, as to program structure, type of activity, institutional setting, size, clientele, and so forth. The National Commission on Resources for Youth classifies programs geographically and by content area. The following partial listing of categories should give an idea of their range. (Descriptions of sample programs appear in the Appendix.)

Communications and the Arts
  films, tv, radio, video
  journalism
  theatre arts
  visual arts

Problems of Minorities
  Black
  Spanish speaking
  other ethnic groups (Indian, Chinese, Italian, etc.)
  women

Entrepreneurial
  business
  employment bureau

Problem Solving
  peer counseling
  drop-in centers, drug and alcohol rehabilitation
  race relations
  policy advisement
  residential co-ops

Educational Services
  curriculum development

early child care
tutoring and teaching

Health Care
- physical health
- mental health
- mental retardation
- health information and referral

Legal Counseling

Community Fieldwork and Action
- community research
- archeology and historical preservation
- consumer services
- housing action
- police work including school security
- museums and libraries
- the elderly
- recreation

School Governance

Ecology and the Environment

As this outline indicates, the Youth Participation rubric encompasses a wide range of possible program activity areas. It is similarly versatile in its possible relationships with diverse institutional settings. Programs have been started by teachers or other school personnel, by community youth-serving agencies, by independent or non-affiliated adults, and by young people themselves, either in their capacity as students or as community youth. They have been based in generalized youth serving institutions like runaway houses and juvenile detention facilities. Even within these institutions there is room for great diversity. A school-connected Youth Participation program, for example, may be one of the following:

- A class in its own right, with credit
- A unit within an established course (e.g. a full time project of limited duration or one that takes up a portion of weekly class time)

- A free-period or off-hours project, either for credit or not
- Cooperative arrangement: project run jointly by a person from the school and a person from the community
- An outside agency operates the program inside a school
- An outside agency operates the program in the community, students get school credit

Other options, not necessarily school-related:

- An outside agency operates the project in the community, youth are paid
- Same as above, youth are volunteers
- Youth run their own project, for themselves

Four Common Program Types. Out of the welter of possible and actual Youth Participation program forms four basic approaches appear to be developed most frequently. Classified by type of program activity, these models still leave a lot of room for variations in content, institutional setting, etc.

1. Helping service to others. These are projects in which youth participants meet regularly and face with other people in a helping relationship. The "others" may be infants and pre-school children, elementary school children, retarded or handicapped children or adults, age peers, hospital patients, or old people. In programs of this type, students typically travel several times a week to the institution (day care center, elementary school, hospital, nursing home, etc.) serving the people to be helped. The activity lends itself to the concurrent experience-based study of the related fields - early childhood, child development, health services, the aged in society, etc. These programs, though they deal in service to others, are noteworthy for their benefits to

the youth themselves, who often gain dramatically in self esteem, responsibility and other dimensions. (See examples 5, 10, 12, 14, and 15 in Appendix.)

2. Community service. These are projects that involve a group of young people in an ongoing activity that has some benefit for the community. In contrast to the helping service-type program, in which the program activity consists of direct contact between youth and the individuals being immediately served, a community service-type program involves youth in a group project activity whose impact extends to the community at large. Some examples are a consumer information and investigation service run by youth in San Diego and Public Service Video, (number 9 in the Appendix).

3. Social action. Social action projects are defined as those in which the energies of the group are directed toward the achievement of some specific development or change in the community - some observable, tangible result. Some examples are to end the pollution of a local river (West High School, number 13 in the Appendix), the restoration of a historic cemetery (Gloucester Experiment, number 7 in the Appendix), the passage of an ordinance protecting consumers, or the establishment of a runaway or drug rehabilitation center.

4. Comunity internships. In models of this type program participants are placed individually with adults at their work place in the community. The interns are each given their own responsibilities while they also learn about the work of the sponsor or "community teacher". The interns may all meet in a seminar to discuss what they are learning or they may develop individual learning contracts or do their own community projects in conjunc-

tion with their placement. Models can range from the "Apprenticeship" Program for nine to fifteen year olds described in the Appendix (number 1) to the Executive Internship Program in which students in New York City were placed with high-ranking policy makers and officials in both public and private organizations.

Benefits of Youth Participation

Benefits to Youth. Earlier sections of this paper have touched, from various perspectives, on adolescent needs. Some of these have derived from looking at what seemed to be missing from adolescent life, while others were stated more positively as opportunities for experiences variously presumed to be requirements for "healthful youth development" or "successful transition to adulthood." The fact that many of these needs, even when stated in the form of objectives, do not lend themselves to precise definition may weaken their scientific base, but it does not invalidate them as recognizable needs. Nor should the lack so far of comprehensive research that would substantiate the claims made for Youth Participation provoke doubts about its potential for benefiting youth. Fortunately, the concept of Youth Participation commands a certain face validity, in that the connection is so direct between the kinds of experiences entailed in Youth Participation programs and such growth dimensions as identity formation, social maturity and knowledge of the adult world.

To say that Youth Participation has the potential to meet a wide range of developmental needs and objectives is not to claim it as a panacea that will solve all the problems of young people. There are no panaceas. Stated strictly as a concept, Youth Participation merely describes a potential for accomplishment that still must be translated into concrete programs. For

> when matters of policy are at issue, one must be careful of analyses that go only so far as to identify the opportunities and potentialities that a particular social arrangement makes available. Most opportunities can be used in a variety of ways, some desirable, some not. Use, then, is the key question, not the mere existence of the opportunity.[48]

Furthermore, far from prescribing a single program, Youth Participation represents, as we have seen, a broad program umbrella that encompasses many possible variations. While such breadth and flexibility make Youth Participation adaptable to a large number of situations and thus constitute one of its strengths, one must be careful in outlining its benefits to point out that (a) different programs will have different aims and different results, (b) individual programs will be differentially effective; and therefore, the claimed benefits are a matter of opportunities, not guarantees.

The following list of benefits to young people, then, indicates the promise of Youth Participation. Programs of Youth Participation can provide young people with opportunities to

- engage in socially useful and personally meaningful activities;
- gain exposure to and experience in the adult world of work;
- interact with people of different ages and backgrounds;
- exercise real responsibility;
- make decisions with consequences for others;
- make decisions affecting oneself, and thus to experience greater sense of control over one's life;
- experience the consequences of one's own actions (including failure), and be accountable for them;

- work with others toward a common goal;
- experiment with roles and identities other than one's own;
- gain, through experience, an understanding of one's community;
- develop and validate one's sense of compassion for others;
- cultivate a concern for the common good in real situations.

By referring to the sample programs described in the Appendix, the applicability and relationship of these benefits to the various program activities will be readily apparent.

Benefits to the Community. By definition of Youth Participation as opportunities for young people to be involved in activities recognized as important by others, the community in which such activity takes place benefits immediately and tangibly. Often a Youth Participation program deals in a direct service. In Minneapolis, for example, high school students working out of an urban community center help aged residents of the neighborhood by doing jobs for them, including heavy work such as painting, repairing or putting up storm windows; they also provide companionship for the old people, many of whom are infirm and live alone, while back at the high school they study the psychology and sociology of aging. In San Diego a group of young people set up a consumer information booth at a local shopping center, where they answer shoppers' questions about product contents, safety, prices, consumer rights, and so forth; the young people are prepared to do research and investigation to track down answers they do not know. Members of Students for Environmental Quality in Brookhaven, Long Island, among many other activities, have twice spearheaded intensive lobbying efforts aimed at passing New York State legislation, once to protect harbor seals from indiscriminate shooting, the second time to prevent the local Carmans River from being polluted; they did background research, wrote reports, organized public meetings and letter-writing campaign, and enlisted the support of their state legislators, environmental organizations and local community groups; both resulted in bills that became law.

Some skeptics of the availability of worthwhile roles for young people in the community have conjured up visions of sending "carloads of kids into the ghetto to pick up garbage and broken bottles, and feel, gee-isn't-that-nice," or of sending "kids into parks and picnic areas to clean up and fix up, but one can't help wondering how the municipal employees who are being paid to do this work are spending their time."[49] Fortunately, young people seldom suffer from such lack of imagination. It is absurd to think the alternatives are so limited or so dull.

Thousands of communities are discovering the enormous resource they have in youthful energy and imagination. Many of the community needs that youth may meet, moreover, are unlikely otherwise to be met. Sometimes these involve tasks that are not high on the list of things that society is willing - or feels able - to pay for. They may involve tasks that would be tedious or low-paying as careers, but that could be turned into rewarding short-term experiences. We can all think of activities we would not mind sampling, but would not like as a steady job. Youth is an ideal time for experimenting with such experiences, especially if one has company and/or a purpose that goes beyond the work itself (e.g. learning how it relates to the broader community). As one seventeen-year-old expressed it, after working as an intern in a large municipal office in California:

> I guess I could say I got one thing I wanted from this, which was to test it out, to see if I could stand an office. I found out that I can't, and it's just made me convinced that what I want to do is have a small business - probably a hardware store in northern California - and be my own boss.
>
> Volunteering is a little special. You're not being paid, you don't have to be a productive employee, and if you're not interested in the work, you can find out without hurting anyone.[50]

For this young man the significance of his experience was not determined by the intrinsic value of the work but by its meaning to him at his particular stage of development. In the words of two adults who have run their own Youth Participation programs:

> It is critical that young people have the power to define needs for themselves, be able to make a just claim to a unique contribution. Then, to even mundane tasks, young people can bring a spirit of adventure. To institutions mired in routine they can bring a fresh perspective and a new set of skills. To society's "cast-offs" they bring a sensitivity quickened by their own experience of being without "place." To a community grown accustomed to its flaws, they can bring an idealism which demands perfection and the audacity to try to achieve it.[51]

Benefits to the Polity. A representative democracy requires the responsible participation of its citizens. Responsible political participation depends on citizens who are reasonably well-informed, who are concerned with both individual rights and the common good, and who have the skills and the willingness to act on their concerns. These are attributes that develop as part of the socialization process, which arises in turn from one's experience:

> One cannot teach about, learn about or experience citizenship without behaving politically. One cannot care about the consequences of public behavior, of public policy decisions, without having developed an "engaged" political sense.[52]

Communities in a democracy consist of many different interest groups. When important issues are decided some group or cause must frequently lose or compromise. This process of arriving at decisions is complex; it requires practice and skill. It also requires the ability to accept compromise and even defeat without opting out or violently rebelling.

> We would argue that experience-based activity involving conflict resolution, problem solving, participation in decision making, and role taking opportunities beget compliance and independence of more than an uncritical law and order sort. Educational experiences of conflict and participation extend the human's capacity to differentiate and integrate and to contemplate different points of view, in other words, to develop principles for evaluating right and wrong and perfecting a sense of responsibility, obligation, law and justice.[53]

Active participation in the life of a community is an indispensable way to acquire the skills, knowledge, and concerns needed to become effective members of one's political community. While Youth Participation is by no means guaranteed to fulfill those needs, their fulfillment certainly seems less likely without it.

On this political dimension, the argument has been raised that Youth Participation may be a way of co-opting youth by putting them to work meeting limited concrete needs, thus diverting their energies from attacking the basic structural flaws that created those problems. While the danger of co-optation is a real one, events of the past few years suggest that exclusive concern for the "big issues", such as stopping the war or ending discrimination, may merely produce a sense of frustration and futility in youth, who are hardly in a position to effect system-wide changes by themselves. On the other hand, direct experience with the system - including acquaintance with its casualties, practical knowledge of its possible mechanisms for self-correction, and the sense of personal efficacy that comes from making a difference on a manageable portion of the problem - all of which are at least potential outcomes of Youth Participation - may produce a confidence and a commitment to tackle social change which no amount of rhetoric could achieve.

Benefits to Schools. Not all Youth Participation programs are or need be associated with schools, although the better ones, as indicated by the criteria offered earlier, provide for deliberate learning of some sort to complement the experience. For many schools, of course, it will be the experiential component that is new or added on, and it is important to appreciate how this new dimension can stimulate and enrich the academic curriculum. Every academic subject has its practical application and a Youth Participation program has been established , somewhere, for each one of them, often by a teacher who felt as bored, cut off or cooped up as did the students.

A single effective Youth Participation program can have a beneficial ripple effect on other portions of the school's curriculum, as others catch sight of the possibilities for application to their activities. A broader effort can have a salutory impact on the whole atmosphere within the school, serving as a basis for renewed motivation and school pride. In one school, service has become a unifying theme for the entire curriculum. Teachers and students in each department, employing a principle called "the humane application of knowledge," find ways they can use the knowledge and skills of their subject to benefit the wider community.

Many Youth Participation programs have occasioned the establishment of special committees to facilitate school-community cooperation. In Marin County, California, a county-wide youth agency is organizing a Community Learning Advisory Council consisting of students, community members, school administrators and teachers to coordinate the placement of young people as "assistants-in-training" to decision making personnel at various community agencies. In Evergreen, Colorado, a similar council, this one including parents, has been set up by a teacher who operates a school-based program.

Whether the initiative comes from inside or outside the school, Youth Participation affords an opportunity to bridge the gulf that surrounds the school and introduce a new relationship between school and community. The community has virtually limitless resources for enriching the educational process for which schools are responsible. Moreover, as the precedent of young people contributing their energies becomes accepted, the community will begin to recognize the importance of youth as a resource as well. In this way the school will cease to be an isolated institution and begin to assume its place as an integrated part of the community.

Perspectives on Youth Participation: Issues and Concerns

Youth Participation Is For All Youth

Youth Participation must not be permitted to become identified with a certain category of youth; rather it must be open to all adolescents. There is a common tendency to assess new programs for their value in helping out with the "problems": can they be used as grease for the squeaky wheel? In most schools this means potential drop-outs or disruptive or underachieving students, those for whom the "regular program" does not "meet their needs". It is a general rule that a sure way to kill a good program is to stigmatize it as designed for troublemakers and dummies - which takes place as soon as everyone sees who is enrolled. By the same token, it would be unfortunate if Youth Participation were regarded as a privilege to be "earned" with good grades or good behavior. It will probably be necessary to iterate and reiterate that Youth Participation is intended to remedy a general condition among all adolescents in our society. The achieving and the acquiescent students may be just as much in need of experience in making decisions, in being socially useful, in working in a group toward a common goal, as the more rebellious and "maladjusted" ones. Finally, to allow Youth Participation to become associated with a single type or stratum of youth - or, what would amount to the same thing, to develop options within Youth Participation programs that could allow resorting of students along elitist or discriminatory lines - would negate one of the great opportunities it represents, namely, the chance to overcome within-the-school segregation of students. Youth Participation can combine within a single program youth of different ages, abilities, sex, social classes and ethnicities. It will thus be necessary to resist the temptation to develop special programs for specific categories of students.

Youth Participation and Minority Youth. Youth Participation has great potential for offsetting some of the disadvantages imposed upon Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Native American and other minority youth. It can reintegrate in an active program setting students who have been segregated into separate school tracks. It can counter a sense of powerlessness by introducing opportunities to make real decisions. It can give minority youth experience in job and community settings not normally available to them. Some minority spokesmen, on the other hand, have expressed fears that Youth Participation might be misused to the detriment of minority youth. They point out, first, that since the ethnocentrism, class bias and racism from which minority students suffer in schools merely reflect the same ills that predominate in the society at large, minority youth have nothing in particular to gain by moving from the schools into the society. In fact, if Youth Participation is used, as discussed above, as an excuse for getting troublesome or underachieving students out of school, it may become nothing but a new sort of "track" to which minority students will be disproportionately assigned. Second, there is the strong concern that a backlash have been developing against recent gains in educational opportunities for minorities, and that funds will be diverted from minority programs to Youth Participation, with the effect of "detouring inner-city youth from college and professional careers." Youth Participation programs "must not be developed or encouraged at the expense of opportunities for higher education," especially for minority youth, "who face discrimination in the job market even when they have solid gold credentials."[54]

To use Youth Participation as a way of throwing out problem students or as a substitute for higher educational opportunity for minority youth would be a betrayal of its spirit and its promise. Implemented with proper safeguards against such discriminatory misuse, Youth Participation can and should serve as a vehicle for reversing inequities and disadvantages, not perpetuating them.

Youth Decision Making Like many of the concepts that help define Youth Participation, decision making needs some definitional attention of its own, first because it is a very vague term with no clear operational meaning, and second, due to this vagueness, it is often used to describe activities that bear little relation to the precepts of Youth Participation.

With decision making having gained increasing recognition as an important developmental activity for young people, three conceptions of decision making have emerged that, by themselves, are inadequate to fulfill the requirements of decision making in Youth Participation. One treats decision making as a skill that can be learned in the abstract apart from actual involvement in a decision making situation. In this approach a hypothetical situation is posed and a rational decision is reached after weighing values, information and anticipated consequences. While this is a valuable process to learn, Youth Participation stresses decision making in a real-life situation of problem solving. It is the experience that, counts, with decision making skill coming as a product of that experience coupled with, where possible, an analysis of the process involved.

A second conception of youth decision making limits it to personal decisions affecting only oneself. While this has great value for such areas as defining personal values (for example, a decision that forces a choice between peer group loyalty and telling the truth) and planning one's life (for example, whether to go to college or join the service), and even overlaps in some instances with Youth Participation activities, it does not include the dimension, basic to Youth Participation, of group decisions affecting others.

The third kind of decision making is that by which selected (or elected) representatives of the young are permitted to sit on governing or policy making bodies composed primarily of adults. This case of "giving a voice to young people" or to the "student body" is often called "participation in decision making" or even "youth participation". While allowing youth representation is a laudable practice, it must be distinguished from what is meant by decision making in Youth Participation, where decision making is considered an experience that every young person should have as an integral part of his or her participatory activities.

Adult Leadership

To be effective as a leader of a Youth Participation program, a person must first be committed to what youth can do - that is, thoroughly committed to the concept of Youth Participation. Second, one must be committed to the specific program itself; this means belief in the ability of the program's design to achieve its purpose, as well as a sense that the program lends itself to one's own personal interests and abilities.

No factor is so pivotal in determining the likelihood of success of a Youth Participation program as the person or persons in charge. Moreover, the attributes that appear to matter most in an adult leader are such intangible personal qualities as respect for young people's capabilities, sensitivity to their needs and feelings, trust in their ability to act responsibly, and the acceptance and judicious exercise of one's own natural authority as an adult. These qualities, unfortunately, do not seem necessarily correlated with the more measurable "qualifications", such as accumulated credits or seniority. Since they are also more qualities of human warmth and human strength than they are mere "interpersonal skills", it is problematical to what extent they can be "trained in." Nevertheless, they are critical enough to have inescapable implications for any plan of implementation of a Youth Participation program. Specifically, they indicate a need to exercise a great deal of care in selecting the adults who will lead and thus set the tone of individual programs. The right adult, it seems, can make up for a weak program design far more readily than a well-conceived program can offset the "wrong" adult. Therefore, not only must the person's personal and interpersonal resources be given great weight, but also every effort should be made to insure a "fit" between that adult and the program task. The program should be compatible with the leader's own strengths and style. In most cases where this fit has been achieved, it is because the program was specifically designed either by or for the person who was to lead it. Conversely, a frequent cause of weakness or failure of programs has been due to the assignment of persons to head programs with little regard either for personal qualities of leadership or for the right "fit" of person to program assignment.

Domination of Youth Programs by Adults.

Although the chief aim of Youth Participation is for young people to have the responsible decision making roles, it is exceedingly difficult to escape domination of adults. Youth are subject to this domination even in their own organizations, where adult leaders or "advisors" - even well meaning ones - often substitute their own priorities for those of the young people. It is difficult for adults to give up the notion that they always "know what is best", and therefore they find various ways to limit or influence choices, or to engineer subtle roadblocks to action. When this happens, youth are deprived of the experience of setting their own priorities, making their own decisions and experiencing the consequences of their actions.

The tendency to be dominated by adults becomes even more pronounced when youth move outside their own organizations to take roles in the adult world. It is almost impossible to resist the ability of established adult institutions and practices to shape and control what young people do. A Youth Participation project sponsored by a business or company, for example, is likely to emphasize the work experience aspect, while a school sponsored one may insist on a strong academic component. Where more than one adult organization is involved, they may compete to determine what form and direction the project will take. All these circumstances tend to diminish the role of youth in setting their own course.

Although there is little likelihood that these problems can be avoided altogether, at least in cases where Youth Participation is funded there can be a specific requirement - a form of affirmative action - that substantial input be afforded to youth in the allocation of funds, determination of program form and emphasis, and the evaluation of programs. The importance of this provision, moreover, will be in direct proportion to the level of funding. For once substantial amounts are involved competition over them is likely to increase, and adults will feel a greater stake in controlling their use.

Training of Teachers.

Training of teachers for Youth Participation is a critical issue in itself simply because it is completely ignored in teacher training institutions, and therefore teachers entering the school system are not even aware of it as a concept, much less have the skills to put it into practice. So the first step is to introduce it, not only as an integral part of the curriculum in both colleges and graduate schools of education, but also as a major focus of in-service training. This latter point is particularly important given the current surplus of teachers, and the consequent likelihood that any significant move to implement Youth Participation in school programs will have to rely on teachers who already are on the job.

The content of the training for Youth Participation is also a critical issue. Because of the nature of Youth Participation as an activity in which young people "do it themselves," it has little in common with most of what teachers learn to do - i.e. actively teach students who remain passive. Perhaps to start, training for Youth Participation should emphasize 1) adolescent capacities for responsible and resourceful action (this may amount, in some cases, to a kind of de-training) and, 2) community resources, both personal and institutional, that may serve as a context and an outlet for Youth Participation. Teachers, like most adults, are often nearly as experience-poor as their students when it comes to the workings of their own communities. They are themselves, after all, products of the same insulating schooling system. Their own lack of first-hand knowledge of the community thus underlies much teacher resistance to programs that expect them to deal with unfamiliar community agencies - a factor that is further suggestive of needed approaches in training.

The Availability of Placement Sites

Opinions vary on the question of whether sufficient situations are available in the community to provide sites for substantial numbers of adolescents, but so far the evidence appears to be on the affirmative side. Although one investigation into the potentiality of career education placements in the private sector indicated only limited possibilities under present circumstances, a study for the National Association of Secondary School Principals of "action-learning" opportunities in public service assignments such as tutoring, hospital work, and conservation was much more optimistic. The report on three regional surveys (urban, suburban, and rural) indicated that in the public sector alone there are probably enough jobs available right now to provide all adolescents aged fifteen to twenty-one with "service learning" placements for over three hours a week. Alternatively, the study suggests "instead of working part-time over a six-year period, one half of all young people could work full-time for a school year as part of growing up."[55] Furthermore:

> the employers who were questioned indicated that, with a modest subsidy to cover some of the costs of supervision or on-the-job training, the number of action-learning opportunities could be increased substantially. And, even in the business sector, it appears that if experiential learning can be shown to achieve its educational purposes, greater numbers of assignments...will open up.[56]

Whatever the maximum number of adolescents who ultimately will be able to be placed, it is certain that many potential sites are available at the present time that are not being used. Those in the field who are operating programs for Youth Participation commonly report great receptivity in the community to requests to provide sites. A junior high school "Community Participation" class in suburban St. Louis that places ninth graders in participatory roles maintains a file of over 100 community agencies that are ready to cooperate. An agency in Marin County, California, called the Switching Yard places over 500 youth in volunteer positions throughout the county each year, and the director insists that the potential for finding responsible positions in existing community locations is vast. Similarly, a program that helped place Philadelphia high school students in participatory action-learning roles had no difficulty finding many more placement sites than needed. In a published account of its experience, the director reported that, as the N.A.S.S.P. surveys suggested, volunteer service in schools, hospitals and social service organizations accounted for the majority of opportunities:

> clearly these are the simplest to locate. Often there are programs already set up but badly undersubscribed and eager for participants. In other cases, it takes very little coaxing to convince a service organization to make arrangements to accept volunteers.
>
> Our own search throughout the Philadelphia area turned up many other kinds of opportunity as well. Peter worked in a professional film studio as an observer, apprentice film editor and general factotum. Ben worked (eventually full time and through the summer) as a host in the Philadelphia Tourist Center and some of the best opportunities were never selected by any intern, because of the small size of the pilot group. A large urban bank, for instance, offered several learning opportunities within its various departments. A data processing firm was prepared to provide interns free class and computer time in its education facility and then put them to work writing demonstration computer programs. A radio station and an educational TV station both offered challenging apprenticeship roles. A manufacturer of industrial textiles arranged a placement in his plant, warehouse, business office for an interested intern.
>
> We did not begin to locate all the possible opportunities in the Philadelphia area - we had niether the time nor the immediate need, but we are convinced that there are thousands of such roles available in this city, and, unless we are badly mistaken, in every city and community in this country.[57]

Given these indications that placements are to be found in numbers at least sufficient to accommodate the initial likely demands, the next question that must be asked is how to insure that the placements will be worthwhile.

Ensuring the Quality of the Work Experience.

Youth Participation must be more than merely the assigning of young people to spend a given amount of time at some community location. Meaningful Youth Participation depends on the quality of the participatory experience.

Youth Participation frequently involves working with adults who have agreed to cooperate but who do not fully appreciate the aims and assumptions of the program. As experience has repeatedly shown, the tendency of adults to underestimate what young people can do, when coupled with the reluctance of many young people to demand more responsibility, can easily lead to the assignment of menial or routine tasks. Similarly it is easy to conclude mistakenly that giving young people responsibility means leaving them alone, when in reality it increases, if anything, their need for support and feedback from adults whose competence and natural authority they respect. Finally, from a cognitive learning perspective, participatory experience may be viewed as "raw" or incomplete until it has served as the basis for systematic reflection.

In order to ensure the quality of Youth Participation, therefore, it is necessary to verify that the activity itself is challenging and important to the participants, and that the young people exercise critical responsibility. Second, the youth should have access to supportive, sympathetic adults, preferably at the work site itself. Third, provision should be made for on-site feedback concerning the activity for the youth, or else (or in addition to) later systematic reflection on the experience.

Voluntary Participation by Adults.

Youth Participation depends for its success in part on the commitment of adults to its principles. There are those who do not believe that young people are capable of acting responsibly or of making important decisions, or who think adolescents should be in school where they won't bother the rest of the world. There are many with these beliefs, including teachers and others who deal with the young. Their number, in fact, underscores the need to ensure that Youth Participation is implemented carefully and selectively. This is particularly important in cases where Youth Participation is being piloted, for an ineffective demonstration can effectively discredit the whole concept of the program. Attitudes antagonistic to meaningful participation for youth also make mandated or large scale (e.g. school-wide or system-wide) implementation, or even the impersonal administrative assignment of individuals to head up programs, highly risky, if not actually conducive to failure. Voluntary participation, then, especially at these early stages, would appear to be virtually prerequisite to successful Youth Participation.

Meeting the Concerns of Cooperating Adults.

Any attempt to promote implementation of Youth Participation must account for the needs and concerns of the adults who will be asked to provide settings for the participatory activities, and in many cases to work directly with young people. For many adults, the presence of young people at their place of work provides a tangible benefit. An urban planner in California, tired of working alone and desiring company, took on a 17 year old intern and had him design and conduct a needed survey of ridership patterns on the local mass transit system. In an orthopedic ward in a Denver hospital, a nine-year-old girl helped give physical therapy to geriatric patients and added a new "human" perspective to the normally technically-oriented staff meetings with her comments and questions. A potter in a Colorado mountain community found that explaining the techniques of his craft to his young "apprentice" and answering his "naive" questions gave him a whole new outlook on his art and a new boost to his creativity.

Realistically speaking, however, most adults feel they get along fine without having to deal with young people at their work place, and many of them are more likely to view the prospect more as a question of cost than of gain. A young person, they may think, is unlikely to have the knowledge or skills required to make an immediate contribution, and training would appear expensive and impractical. Thus the young person might be expected merely to disrupt the established routine, take up time that would otherwise be devoted to work and add an unknown factor to the ecology of the work place. These fears must be recognized as grounded, to some extent, in reality. To agree to accept a young person does often entail an added burden, so this must be weighed against what the young person can contribute. Perhaps more important, it must be weighed against the social value of investing in the education and growth of the coming generation of one's fellow citizens. Many will respond (many already have) at this loftier level of motivation, but for many more it will not be enough. Although voluntary cooperation of adults is as essential as is voluntary participation for youth, the idea of incentives of some kind might be explored for offering one's resources to a Youth Participation project.

Even when an adult is willing to devote time and effort to Youth Participation, of course, there is no guarantee that the experience will be a successful one. For just as youth have been deprived of contact with their elders, adults lack experience with youth, and the result is a lack of interactional skills on both sides. Thus, if Youth Participation is to take hold to any significant degree, some provision must be made to train adults, to help them reorient their work world to make room for youth, and to bring them into closer cooperation with youth-serving agencies, including schools.

School Credit.

A number of questions are contained in the critical issue of offering school credit for Youth Participation. Some argue that participating in action that makes a real contribution to the community, particularly when it involves helping people directly, is its own reward, and that offering credit cheapens the activity by suggesting (and introducing) a pay-off for service willingly granted. Others contend that offering school credit (or pay) is a needed sign that adults take the activity seriously enough to attach a concrete value to it. But there are some more practical considerations. Since schools are the means through which society certifies educational accomplishment, their formal sanction of the educational value of Youth Participation is vital for Youth Participation itself to be taken seriously. Granting credit also assumes that time will be provided within the school day for Youth Participation, and that students will not have to give up a credited course to take part in a "volunteer" one. The issue, moreover, goes beyond the mere assigning of credit at the high school level. Equally important is that credits for learning through Youth Participation be recognized and accepted by colleges[58], for without their support the college-bound will stick to straight academic courses and Youth Participation will be relegated to the non-college bound student. These considerations raise the additional problem of how to credit participatory learning experiences. There is at present no established method of accrediting the kinds of aims claimed for Youth Participation, or even measuring them. While this is clearly an area in need of research and attention, fortunately there is already an inclination among school people to recognize the educational value of Youth Participation.

> An increasing number of state and school systems now permit the granting of credit earned in (Youth Participation) programs toward the partial fulfillment of graduation requirements. Professional people, students and laymen regard community involvement as an integral part of the educational process and

> believe that many of the basic objectives of learning can be achieved through service projects in the school and community.[59]

The Executive Secretary of the North Central Association of the Secondary Schools and Colleges, one of the largest and most influential bodies among the regional acrediting associations, identified certain guidelines that other regional associations might well replicate to further the development and implementation of Youth Participation projects. The Secretary reported:

> It is probably safe to say that the NCA Secondary Commission operates on the following principles in regard to Action-Learning and the other new learning modalities coming to the fore.
>
> 1. If the experience has proved educational values, it is and should be creditable.
>
> 2. The determination of whether a learning experience relates directly to secondary education, and hence merits school credit, should lie mainly in the hands of the local professional staff.
>
> 3. Those learning experiences undertaken beyond the purview of teachers of the school need subsequently to be varified in some way by the professional staff of the school before credit is granted.[60]

The Question of Pay.

Two arguments have been advanced for maintaining Youth Participation-type activities on a volunteer basis rather than introducing pay. One argument is based on the expectation that the majority of placements will be in volunteer organizations anyway. The other is that salaried work for youth, whether in the private or public sector, might pose a threat to the employment of adults especially the unemployed and the marginally employed. Until more is known about the effect on the labor market of an influx of large numbers of young people, moreover, opposition to youth programs entailing pay can be expected from organized labor.[61] Nor does it seem likely that introducing a youth wage that is lower than the minimum wage, as recommended by the second Coleman report,[62] would attract much support, given organized labor's consistent opposition to youth-wage legislation.

On the other side of the question, many young people are in need of money as a practical necessity; some have been obliged to drop out of educationally enriching Youth Participation programs in order to find paid work, usually in menial jobs. Payment for one's work in our society, moreover, is an affirmation of its worth; it can be seen as evidence of one's maturity and independence.

Youth Participation, however, should not be seen as a means of employment; rather it is the quality of the experience that counts, and there is reason to think that young people themselves place more importance on having a good experience than on receiving pay. Furthermore, there is evidence of an inverse relationship between the two. The directors of Kaleidoscope, a program that placed high school students in experiential learning situations in Philadelphia, made the following discovery:

> We found...that there were many organizations who would offer pay - some even insisted on doing so... Almost invariably, however, the jobs that offered pay were doing so in place of offering a learning opportunity. These organizations that did insist on paying had in mind the most repetitive and least challenging activities - answering the telephone, filling invoices, operating a machine, licking and stamping envelopes, typing form letters... Insisting that the work be done on a volunteer basis provided us with an important advantage: it became a bargaining point with placement personnel. The work must not pay in wages, we said, it must pay in learning.[63]

The Cost of Youth Participation.

Youth Participation programs have been implemented in many schools and youth-serving agencies with no additional cost. This has been accomplished by reorganizing or changing the emphasis of established programs. In a rural Minnesota town, for example, students in a high school English class provide services in a home for the retarded, an elementary school and a nursing home; then their experiences serve as an ongoing basis for learning reading and writing skills, as they record their impressions in journals and read theoretical material on their field service. Similarly, in a New York City settlement house, participants in the youth program provide other students with intensive remedial work in reading through a tutoring program. These programs cost no more than the regular school or settlement house activities for youth, but provide a real benefit to the community. Numerous similar examples could be cited in which a mere rearrangement of priorities has enabled the school or youth-serving agency to conduct an excellent Youth Participation project at no extra cost.

If Youth Participation is set up to supplement the regular program, rather than being integrated within it, then extra cost will probably be entailed. The additional expenditure can be weighed against the advantages of expanded and greatly improved activities for youth. Extra funding is also particularly warranted in setting up strong models of Youth Participation that can be influential in encouraging wider implementation with integration into ongoing programs. In general the additional funds required will probably be less than would be required to introduce, say, a new science curriculum or a health delivery system. The reason is that a strong Youth Participation program should rely on the development by youth of their own resources. Services, for instance, are characteristically provided by youth rather than for them. In a typical tutoring program in which youth tutor younger children, materials for tutor-designed learning activities are generated by the youth themselves. Youth who work in day care centers are ingenious at obtaining free supplies for educational use with small children. The participants in one project persuaded several companies to donate all they needed to fully equip the playground they designed. When needed, youth may also raise their own money. It is thus an error to assume that Youth Participation will benefit in all cases from large-scale funding. The effect, in fact, may be to undermine youthful initiative, or to force the needs of youth into competition with those of adults who seek to control the funds.

Finally there seems to be little appreciation among many school people of the vast potential within each school's community to be tapped as an available and low-cost (if not always cost-free) learning resource. Wishing to appear neither overly optimistic[64] nor unduly pessimistic, one might suggest that the critical expenditure in this area will be more in imagination and will than in funds.

Participation for Children.

Although this paper has focused mostly on adolescents, and although adolescents, standing on the threshold of adulthood, have a particularly urgent need for experiences that will enable them to become responsible, contributing adults, younger people than adolescents suffer no less acutely from being shunted off into the margins of society, where they experience what has been called the "inutility of childhood". Many of the symptoms of the adolescent predicament apply as well to children: isolation from the rest of society, segregation into age groups, decline of the strength and salience of the family, and denial of opportunities to exercise responsibility. To pursue just one of these for a moment, the Report to the President of the 1970 White House Conference on Children carried the following observation:

> Our children are not entrusted with any real responsibilities in their family, neighborhood or community. Little that they do really matters. When they do participate, it is in some inconsequential undertaking. They are given duties rather than responsibilities; that is, the ends and means have been determined by someone else, and their job is to fulfill an assignment involving little judgment, decision making or risk. The latter remain within the purvey (sic) of supervising adults. Although this policy is deemed to serve the interests of the children themselves by protecting them from burdens beyond their years, there is reason to believe that it has been carried too far in contemporary American society and has contributed to the alienation and alleged incapacity of young people to deal constructively with personal and social problems. The evidence indicates that children acquire the capacity to cope with difficult situations when they have been given the opportunity to take on consequential responsibilities in relation to others, and are held accountable for them.[65]

Participatory experiences thus are vital for the healthy social and psychological development of children as well as adolescents. This is beginning to be recognized at local levels by growing numbers of individual teachers and other adults with concern for children. There is a strong need for further investigation and promotion of these efforts.

CONCLUSION: PROSPECTS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

> **In youth, ego strength emerges from the mutual confirmation of individual and community, in the sense that society recognizes the young individual as a bearer of fresh energy and that the individual so confirmed recognizes society as a living process which inspires loyalty as it receives it, maintains allegiance as it attracts it, honors confidence as it demands it.**
>
> **Erik Erikson**

In recent years at least three major traditions in American culture - individualism, pragmatism and self-confidence - have been at work at the grass roots inventing practical, if limited, programmatic solutions to the adolescent predicament. These isolated hopeful signs have taken on enormous significance since the many recent calls by prestigious study panels for just such experiential opportunities for youth. Yet these parallel developments - well-publicized reports detailing the dimensions of the problems of youth, detailed analytical justifications for participatory activities for youth, and numerous local models in every kind of setting and for all kinds of youth - have yet to gain widespread recognition or to serve as the basis for major new policy initiatives. The various admonitory reports and dire statistics on youth have failed to generate the sense of crisis in either public or official consciousness. In a recent 40-page special supplement to the New York Times entitled "Fall Survey of Education and Career Development", for example, not one of the thirty-eight articles dealt with or even mentioned the importance of Youth Participation or Action Learning or other experiential education programs in positive adolescent development.[66] Similarly, according to a recent Gallup poll, 67 percent of the public nationally feels the schools are doing a good job.[67]

Conditions in at least four spheres of American society seem to stand in the way of such recognition's taking place and of substantial institutional reform to provide significant new opportunities for youth.

In the economic sphere, the "adult world" to which young people seek access is a capitalistic one based on competitive, not helping, relations. This makes potential utilizers of youth in the marketplace wary of any undertaking that might reduce productivity or entail additional cost. Perhaps more critical, competition for jobs dominates the labor market, and in the absence of a full-employment economy any prospective influx of new "hands" into the "adult world of work" is likely to be looked upon with disfavor by organized labor. Furthermore, to the extent that Youth Participation does overlap the job market, those who will be most threatened will be the marginally employed, such as school drop-outs and welfare recipients, or those disadvantaged groups, such as minorities and women, who in increasing numbers are seeking entry-level jobs.

All these factors, of course, are magnified to huge proportions by the current economic recession. Employers in both public and private sectors have cut expenditures, labor is stung by severe unemployment, and workers with low skills or little seniority have rejoined youth in disproportionate numbers in the ranks of the jobless. The pinch has also been transmitted to the schools, where voters have demanded, in the one public institution whose budget they can limit directly, an end to the "frills" - that is, to all but the traditional core program.

The schools themselves are another arena of potential resistance to Youth Participation. American schools historically have promoted conformity and control as social goods that were central to their role. Dedicated to mass education and managerial efficiency, moreover, they have never been receptive to any substantial degree either to special program alternatives, which smacked of elitism, or to basic reforms that served the developmental needs of children before the bureaucratic needs of the institution. All these strains in traditional American schooling collide with the aims of Youth Participation, which promotes responsibility and initiative for youth, and seeks institutional reform that meets the positive developmental needs of adolescents.

Another roadblock lies in societal attitudes toward youth. American youth could not have been so effectively cut off from the rest of society without a genuine antagonism towards them on the part of adults. Unlike some other societies, particularly those in some socialist countries, our citizens lack collective, or "superordinate", ideals and goals; our deep-seated individualism prevents us from subordinating our individual interests to the collective will of the group. No matter that the differences perceived by adults in youth culture, lifestyles and values have been perpetuated and reinforced by the very social vacuum to which they have been consigned by adults themselves. The operative fact is that adults, as reflected by their communications media, their public officials and their institutions for youth, appear to have little sympathy for their discomfort. The media continue to reinforce negative or simplistic adolescent stereotypes that block understanding; policy-makers continue to pass programs for youth that stress deviance-control and attacks on symptoms rather than positive development; and institutions continue to force youth into dependence and passivity.

A fourth element that appears to stand in the way of action to benefit youth could be an uncharacteristic sense of disillusionment, pessimism, and self-doubt that have come to afflict many Americans in the recent past. Among other traumatic events, the failures and misdeeds at the highest levels exposed in the Pentagon Papers and by the Watergate and other revelations have produced grave misgivings not only about official American political morality but about institutionalized authority in general. The result seems to be a (perhaps temporary) loss of faith in the ability of our public institutions to redress social needs and, in the case of youth, an unwillingness even to acknowledge their plight.

In the absence, then, of economic prosperity and full employment, of a revolution in the schools, of a new commitment by adults to adolescent welfare and of renewed national self-confidence, on what grounds is there any hope for Youth Participation? The prospects are not unrelentingly gloomy. In an article entitled "Trend is Not Destiny", Rene Dubos, professor emeritus at Rockefeller University, maintains that history contains many instances in which dangerous trends in a society have given rise to a ferment of public concern that has acted to modify or avert what would otherwise have been disastrous consequences. The modern world may have multiplied the potential threats to society, continues Dubos, but is also enhances our ability to cope with them.

> One of the characteristics of our times is thus the rapidity with which steps can be taken to change the orientation of certain trends and even to reverse them. Such changes usually emerge from grass-root movements rather than from official directives...[68]

Support for this optimistic outlook[69] may be found in local communities, where thousands of young people and adults have already launched their own programs to meet their immediate needs. Yet whether these still-scattered efforts ultimately will be sufficient to reverse the long-established trend of isolating the young - a trend that has already attained the status, by some reckonings, of an accomplished social revolution[70] - remains an open question.

Alec Dickson, founder of Community Service Volunteers in England and a pioneer in securing meaningful opportunities for youth, was asked recently to define the essence of Youth Participation. "Youth Participation," he replied, "is when young people can say, 'We did it ourselves.'"

There is much that youth can do to contribute actively and responsibly to their own development and to the life of their communities. What they cannot do on their own is create the climate and the conditions that will permit them to take these participatory roles in society on a widespread scale. That is the challenge and the task of the adult world.

APPENDIX

Capsule Descriptions of 15 Sample Youth Participation Projects

Appendix: Capsule Descriptions of 15 Sample Youth Participation Projects

The Youth Participation programs briefly described here have been selected out of hundreds of possible examples to give an idea of the range in activities, settings, program structures and other dimensions encompassed by Youth Participation. The young participants in these representative projects take such roles as artists (#3, below), video producers (9), editors of a community magazine (6), job counselors (2), peer counselors (10), day care workers (5, 14), physical therapists (12), tutors (15), documenters and restorers of historical sites (7, 8), and defenders of the environment (13). There are programs based in regular public schools (4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15), in alternative public schools (1, 9), and in the community, including youth-serving agencies (3, 6, 7, 11). Some projects that began independently in the community later established ties with schools (e.g. arrangements for an associated school course, or school credit) (3, 6, 7), while some others involve community-based agencies that have come to operate partially within schools (10, 11). There are rural (1, 12, 14), suburban (10, 11, 15) and urban (3, 4, 5, 6) programs, and the young people involved cover spectrums of interests, abilities, age, class and ethnicity.

15 Sample Youth Participation Projects

1. Junior high and elementary school students at the Open Living School, a public-supported alternative school in the mountain town of Evergreen, Colorado spend at least half a day each week interning with community adults through the school's Apprenticeship Program. "Apprentices" from the ages of nine to fifteen have carried out responsible duties at an educational television station, at day care centers and at a nearby zoo; they have served as "apprentices" to electricians, veterinarians, photographers, store managers and potters. The purpose of the program is for young people to experience work with adults who are neither teachers nor parents and to learn about the life of their community through firsthand experience.

2. Students at Berkeley (California) East Campus High School have established a Career Center in which the students are trained and paid (or receive school credit) to advise their peers on employment matters. The young staff members locate paying jobs for students, learn the requirements for various vocations and then counsel their schoolmates who seek information and job placements. The students also learn such job-seeking skills as being interviewed, collecting references and writing resumes, which they then pass on to other students who come to the center. In a school where nearly three-fourths of the students are from low-income backgrounds, the Career Center provides a vitally-needed service.

3. Founded in 1968 by a New York City artist, Cityarts Workshop, Inc. is a community arts group which involves young people from various parts of the city in making public works of art for their neighborhoods. A professional artist from Cityarts helps the young people decide on a theme for a mural, design it and transfer it to a large exterior wall; then they put up scaffolding and paint it. Cityarts youth have worked on over 15 projects including a Jewish Heritage mural, a History of Chinese Immigration to the United States mural, a Black Liberation mural and a Wall of Respect for Women mural. Frequently the young people get community residents of all ages to help them complete their projects.

4. Students at George Washington High School in Denver, Colorado devised a Computer Car Pooling plan which was adopted by their city. Students in the Contemporary

Issues class wondered about the possibility of using the school's computer to organize Denver residents into car pools to conserve resources and a student from the Advanced Computer class worked out the details. He designed a computer program which would give residents printout lists of other people who live in their area and keep the same work or school hours. The young people became consultants to large Denver firms which wanted to offer computerized car pooling services to their employees and George Washington became the center of the car pooling effort.

5. Three days a week, 15 students at Bulkeley High School in Hartford, Connecticut travel to four urban day care centers to engage children in learning activities which the young people have designed themselves. Students in this Day Care Youth Helper Program receive credit for combining that fieldwork with a seminar taught twice a week by a home economics teacher at Bulkeley. In the seminar, they develop good parenting skills by learning early child development concepts and relating them to their day care experience.

6. The Fourth Street i is a community magazine operated entirely by young people on the Lower East Side of New York City. They tap the resources of the neighborhood, an area with a long history as a ghetto for new populations arriving in the United States. The young people have tried to use their magazine as a voice for poor residents of various ethnic groups by interviewing local artists and craftspeople and by printing poetry and artwork by people who live in the community. The young people who publish the magazine interview, edit, translate, take photographs and do production work. Their magazine has been used as a reading text in elementary, junior and senior high schools.

7. The Gloucester Experiment in Gloucester, Massachusetts began when a resident sculptor saw in a colonial cemetery, vandalized and overgrown with weeds, an opportunity to use the talent and energy of young people. With his backyard as headquarters, the sculptor recruited a group of local youth along with a few interested carpenters, architects and teachers, and the restoration began. The young people did everything from manual labor, including landscaping, clearing brush and straightening headstones, to research and historical documentation. Eventually the high school in Gloucester agreed to grant students academic credit for their work. Students who participate

in Experiment restorations acquire skills such as surveying and stone cutting and learn history, archaeology, botany and ecology.

8. The High School Archaeology Project in Cobb County, Georgia began because a Pebblebrook High School student discovered that his school was sitting on a 2,000-year-old Indian site. Just about the time he made his discovery the county announced that it was going to install a large sewer pipeline right through the school site. Having enlisted the help of an archaeologist from the University of Georgia and other experts, students began an emergency dig. They unearthed pottery fragments, stone tools and bones and, in the process, learned geography, ecology and history. The work eventually became part of the school curriculum.

9. Public high school students at St. Paul, Minnesota's alternative New City School are using video tape as an instrument to inform the public and influence decisions on important municipal issues. In one project, representatives from the Minneapolis and St. Paul Tenants' Unions asked students from New City's Public Service Video Workshop to help make a tape on renters' rights. The unions supplied the legal information and the students furnished the technical know-how and the talent. With the direction of two professional video technicians, students have made over 30 tapes for community agencies. For each tape they do research, scripting, directing, inteviewing, narrating and editing. Students earn a trimester's social studies credit while learning first-hand about different issues and viewpoints by working with community adults.

10. About 20 students in each of three Marin County, California high schools are involved in Shoulders, a peer counseling program which was organized by the Marin Family Services Agency. Students go through a 13-week after-school training program in which they learn counseling, communications and utilization of community resources. Then they counsel peers referred to them by guidance counselors and administrators; take part in seminars in which they practice advanced counseling techniques and share problems they are encountering in counseling; and organize outreach activities, such as monthly forums open to parents, teachers and students, and a monthly student opinion poll.

11. The Switching Yard, the youth placement branch of the

Volunteer Bureau of Marin County, California, trains students and pays them to act as volunteer coordinators in their high schools. In addition to referring young people to agencies and programs which need volunteers, the Switching Yard operates some projects of its own. In one project, the Children's Social Activity Program, high school students lead therapeutic play groups for emotionally disturbed children and receive junior college behavioral science course credit. The Switching Yard staff also consults with administrators and teachers from local high schools on ways to integrate youth participation into the curriculum.

12. In rural Adams, Minnesota, high school students spend their study halls and lunch hours giving physical therapy and companionship to handicapped children whose special education class meets right in the high school. Students began this Teens Who Care project and then felt they needed additional training. They traveled with the children to the Mayo Clinic to talk to specialists and to learn how to carry out individual therapy prescriptions. Back at the high school, students continued their training in a social studies course called "Developmental Disabilities" and worked with a physical therapist from a neighboring community.

13. The West High School Ecology Club in Manchester, New Hampshire was formed in 1971 when a group of students began a campaign to clean up the Merrimack River. One student discovered that the discharge from a local meat packing plant was turning the Merrimack into "Blood River." He and classmates documented the pollution and through their investigation helped bring legal action against the culprit. West High ecology students also design ecology lessons and teach them to elementary school children; petition for environmental protection legislation; and make envitonmental testing equipment and show teachers and students from all over New England how to use it.

14. High school students in the small, rural town of Laurens, New York spend one hour four days each week helping care for children of their community through the Youth Helper Program. Ten students go to a day care center in a town church and ten go to Mt. Vision, a school for severely handicapped children. The young people share any special skills they may have, such as carpentry or sewing, with

the children. They also have used these skills to carry out related community service projects, such as building a new wing on Mt. Vision and constructing playground equipment at the day care center. The Youth Helpers receive credit for volunteering and for meeting in a daily seminar to discuss child-rearing practices, mental retardation and mental health services.

15. In the Hightstown, New Jersey Youth Tutors Youth Program, 22 high school students earn credit for traveling four times a week to two elementary schools to tutor children who need extra academic or social attention. Many of the tutors have their own learning problems so taking responsibility for helping educate a younger child has helped them improve their own academic skills, as well as develop responsibility and self-confidence. They use materials they have designed to help individual children with reading or math problems. They plan these lessons and also share tutoring techniques and experiences in a weekly seminar at the high school.

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